

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF SOUTH DAKOTA
SOUTHERN DIVISION

JOSEPH DONALD GARCIA,)	Civ. 13-4147-KES
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	
vs.)	ORDER GRANTING LEAVE TO
)	PROCEED IN FORMA PAUPERIS
OKLAHOMA; and)	AND DISMISSING COMPLAINT
SOUTH DAKOTA,)	
)	
Defendants.)	

Plaintiff, Joseph Donald Garcia, is an inmate at the Minnehaha County Jail in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Garcia has filed a pro se civil rights lawsuit pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and has requested leave to proceed in forma pauperis pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915. Dockets 1, 2.

Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA), a prisoner who “brings a civil action or files an appeal in forma pauperis . . . shall be required to pay the full amount of a filing fee.” 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). The court may, however, accept partial payment of the initial filing fee where appropriate. Therefore, “ ‘[w]hen an inmate seeks pauper status, the only issue is whether the inmate pays the entire fee at the initiation of the proceedings or over a period of time under an installment plan.’ ” *Henderson v. Norris*, 129 F.3d 481, 483 (8th Cir. 1997) (quoting *McGore v. Wrigglesworth*, 114 F.3d 601, 604 (6th Cir. 1997)).

The initial partial filing fee that accompanies an installment plan is calculated according to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), which requires a payment of 20 percent of the greater of:

- (A) the average monthly deposits to the prisoner's account; or
- (B) the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the 6-month period immediately preceding the filing of the complaint or notice of appeal.

Garcia has reported average monthly deposits to his prisoner trust account of \$0 and an average monthly balance of *negative* \$286.02. Docket 5. Based on this information, the court grants Garcia leave to proceed in forma pauperis and waives the initial partial filing fee pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(4).

But the inquiry does not end there. The PLRA requires the court to screen Garcia's complaint to determine whether any claims should be dismissed. Pursuant to the PLRA, the court must dismiss an action or any portion thereof if the prisoner has raised a claim that "(i) is frivolous or malicious; (ii) fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted; or (iii) seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief." 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i)–(iii).

STANDARD OF REVIEW

A claim "is frivolous where it lacks an arguable basis in law or in fact." *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989). The court may, therefore, dismiss a claim as frivolous when it is "based on an indisputably meritless legal theory" or where the factual contentions "are clearly baseless." *Id.* at 327. The court may dismiss a complaint for failure to state a claim when "it

appears beyond doubt that the plaintiff can prove no set of facts in support of his claim which would entitle him to relief.” *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 45–46 (1957). In reviewing a complaint under this standard, “[t]he court must presume that the factual allegations in the complaint are true and accord all reasonable inferences from those facts to the [pleader].” *Valiant-Bey v. Morris*, 829 F.2d 1441, 1443 (8th Cir. 1987) (citing *Holloway v. Lockhart*, 792 F.2d 760, 762 (8th Cir. 1986)).

Pro se complaints, “ ‘however inartfully pleaded,’ [are] held to ‘less stringent standards than formal pleadings drafted by lawyers.’ ” *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976) (quoting *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972)); *see also Frey v. City of Herculaneum*, 44 F.3d 667, 671 (8th Cir. 1995) (noting that “civil rights pleadings should be construed liberally”).

Nonetheless, a pro se complaint must comply with the minimal requirements set forth in the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which specifically require pleadings to contain “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). Although a pro se complaint need not contain detailed factual allegations, it must contain “more than labels and conclusions, and a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007). Simply stated, a pro se complaint must “allege facts sufficient to support the claims advanced.” *Stone v. Harry*, 364 F.3d 912, 914 (8th Cir. 2004). The court is not required to “supply additional facts, nor will [it]

construct a legal theory that assumes facts that have not been pleaded.” *Id.* (citing *Dunn v. White*, 880 F.2d 1188, 1197 (10th Cir. 1989)). If the complaint does not contain these bare essentials, dismissal is appropriate. *Beavers v. Lockhart*, 755 F.2d 657, 663 (8th Cir. 1985).

DISCUSSION

“[T]o state a claim for relief under § 1983, a plaintiff must allege sufficient facts to show ‘(1) that the defendant(s) acted under color of state law, and (2) that the alleged wrongful conduct deprived the plaintiff of a constitutionally protected federal right.’” *Zutz v. Nelson*, 601 F.3d 842, 848 (8th Cir. 2010) (quoting *Schmidt v. City of Bella Villa*, 557 F.3d 564, 571 (8th Cir. 2009)). In the instant case, Garcia claims that defendants have charged him for the same offense on three separate occasions—once in county court, once in city court, and once in state court. Docket 1 at 4. As a result, Garcia has been twice divorced and has lost several jobs. *Id.* Moreover, his son has been removed from his home. *Id.* at 5. To remedy this alleged constitutional violation, Garcia requests “[f]ull pardon by [the] state and federal government.” *Id.* at 7.

The primary issue raised by Garcia’s complaint relates to the legality of his confinement. As the United States Supreme Court has noted, “habeas corpus is the exclusive remedy for a state prisoner who challenges the fact or duration of his confinement and seeks immediate or speedier release, even though such a claim may come within the literal terms of § 1983.” *Heck v.*

Humphrey, 512 U.S. 477, 481 (1994) (citing *Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 488–90 (1973)). Therefore, because Garcia seeks to invalidate his allegedly illegal sentence and be released from prison, he has failed to state a claim upon which relief may be granted pursuant to § 1983. His sole remedy is a writ of habeas corpus. Accordingly, it is

ORDERED that Garcia's motion for leave to proceed in forma pauperis (Docket 2) is granted. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(4), the initial partial filing fee is waived.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the institution having custody of Garcia is directed that whenever the amount in Garcia's trust account, exclusive of funds available in Garcia's frozen account, exceeds \$10, monthly payments that equal 20 percent of the funds credited to the account the preceding month will be forwarded to the United States District Court Clerk's office pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2), until the filing fee of \$350 is paid in full.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Garcia's complaint (Docket 1) is dismissed for failure to state a claim upon which relief may be granted pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915.

Dated March 3, 2014.

BY THE COURT:

/s/ Karen E. Schreier

KAREN E. SCHREIER
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE